OBN NEWS

January 1991

OBN News, 519 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2C9 Tel: (416)-649-1356 / Fax: (416)-649-1314

The Ontario Bisexual Network (OBN) is a group formed to enable contacts among bisexual people in Ontario, and to help them undertake activities of interest. At present, these activities include: a mailing list, a newsletter, support group meetings, social activities, a political action group, education of others, information sharing, and safe sexuality information. The network's only mandate is to bring people together. — OBN Meeting, August 2, 1990.

A New Dimension for Pride Day

Rob presented ideas before the Lesbian and Gay Pride Day Committee regarding the inclusion of bisexuality in both the name and the spirit of Pride Day. His ideas were well received, and the committee will consider including "bisexuality" in the written material, ads, etc. leading up to the 1991 event.

It was suggested that this might pave the way for an eventual renaming of the event to include bisexuals, perhaps by 1992 Pride Day. It also presents an opportunity for OBN members to work along with other members of the gay and lesbian communities of Toronto, towards ending all oppression of people who have same-gender attractions.

Contact Rob or Bruce to get involved.

All Ideas Welcome at OBN Business Meetings

We will in fact entertain virtually any idea that OBN members wish to raise at our twice-monthly meetings. At the last meeting, people raised many good suggestions.

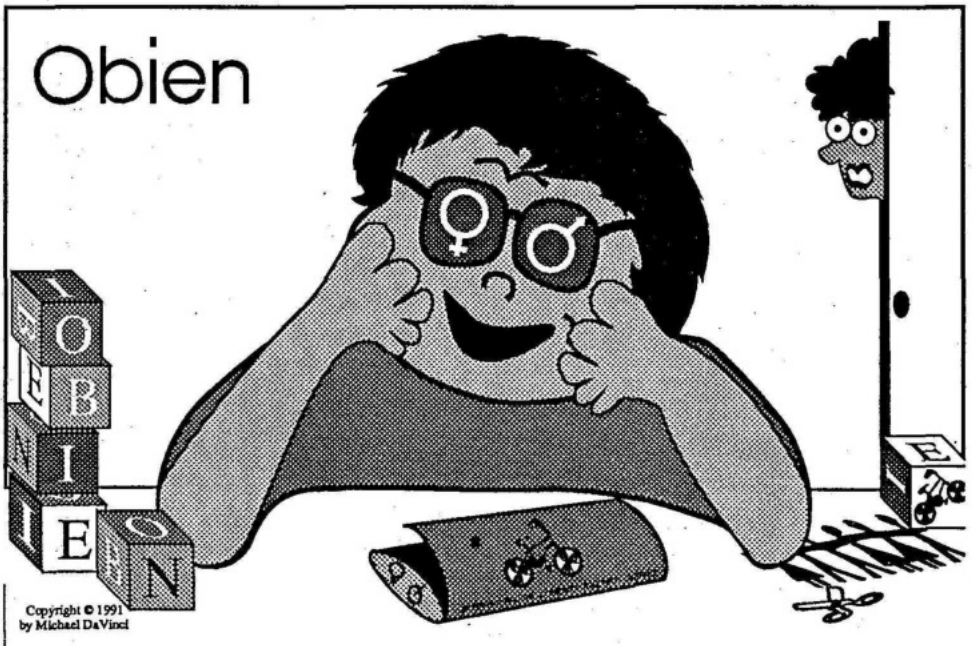
For example, at the last meeting it was offered that an AMPA (Amateur Press Association) is a good structure for keeping in touch with people. This is a method whereby one organization will receive and collate smaller bulletins or newsletters and then send the collection back out to the contributing groups.

One person noted that it is very important to start the meetings in a way that invites people to share their spiritual side, and show their warm and sensitive nature.

One new person who is fast becoming a 'regular' has offered to find a suitable computer bulletin board through which we can exchange text for articles in the newsletter.

December 20th OBN MeetingTalks About *Sex*

Under the skilled guidance of Andrew as facilitator, OBN tackled the tricky subject of *sex* at our mid-month meeting in December 1990 at the 519 Community Centre. As in all matters,



"Hey, Mom — like my new bi-focals?"

Meeting Times

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month, from 6 to 8 p.m., and on the third Thursday of every month from 8 to 10 p.m., at the 519 Community Center. (519 Church Street, just north of Wellesley.) You may have your name and address added to our mailing list at any meeting, or by writing to OBN, c/o 519 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2C9.

Who to Contact

The following is a list of OBN members who have volunteered their time to talk with you about questions you may have, or if you just need someone for emotional support:

Bill Jeffery (416) 922-4262
Bruce Small (416) 649-1356
Carol Broderick (416) 766-7011
Catherine Crocket (416) 537-5832
Les Green (416) 968-6955
Rob Cusson (416)-362-9892
Scott Lucas (416) 633-5666

we represent a pretty wide array of opinions and lifestyles, but what became apparent is that for many of us, *sex* is an integral part of our lives, and for reasons as varied as the number attending, is very *important* to us.

Once again, our lively topic discussions helped us to reveal a bit more about each other and get to know each other more as complete human beings.

Out and About in Europe

(Travel Notes with a Bi Perspective)

by Colin Hinz
13 September 1990

At the OBN meeting of 6 September 1990 I managed to make a few comments about my recent trip to Europe. Unfortunately, meeting time ran out long before I did, so a few people suggested that I write about my experiences for the OBN News, as I won't be able to attend any OBN meetings in the near future.

What follows is a city-by-city rundown, touching on subjects I think would be of interest to fellow bisexuals who may be travelling abroad sometime in the future. In most cities I visited, my stay was so brief (averaging two days) that I was unable to suss out the local night life. So be it. Okay, the first city I visited was ...

London

London has about 1000 bookshops, which means it's possible to find books of every subject imaginable. One shop on Camden High Street, *Compendium*, is my favourite of all shops I visited in Europe. The name says it all: it's much like *This Ain't the Rosedale Library* meets *Glad Day*. The stock of gay/lesbian books isn't that large, but it is quite good. Great selection of political and philosophical material too.

Aside from that, I had no contact with the g/l/bi community in London. Before I left Canada, I attempted to make contact with a bi artists', writers' and musicians' group, but there was no response. Either the organization is defunct or else they are incredibly slow in answering their mail. A pity, that.

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Bi Poetry Corner

(This poem was created jointly by those who attended the December 6, 1990 OBN Meeting, with the help of our poet guest John, brought by Leo, who opened people's minds that evening to many things through the art of his poetry.)

There's a sleepingdog under the poetry
Who would prefer we just let it lie
Or who would rather lie
down — or about — the truth,
But universally, dishonesty proves to be
The safer choice — truth is a crock
Lies, create a webbed trail of deceit
Life is complicated because of labels.

Labels, labia, lost little pearls
if only I'd written my name down, I'd have them still now
Why this urge for anonymity,
this spiralling into egolessness
But yo! In the end you gotta ask
What time is up??
What time is love?
Oh about 4:30, why?
Phil Donahue is on.
Maybe we'll be on it.

Glad Day Shelves Bisexuality

One of our members has noticed that Glad Day Bookshop in Toronto has set aside a shelf for books about bisexuality. Although stock is still pretty sparse on this subject, the willingness is there, and readers are invited to check it out and offer any suggestions for acquisitions to the Glad Day management.

Rural Refugee Party

Members of OBN gathered from far and wide, by carpool, GO Train and special rescue, to attend a holiday refugee party at Bruce's place northeast of Toronto on December 28th, 1990.

The occasion was called to allow members of OBN and others to "be themselves" at a time of year when many of us find it difficult to be as open about our lifestyles as we would like.

PWA Fundraiser

On February 10, 1991, there will be a P.W.A. Foundation fundraiser at the Premier Dance Theatre, on Queen's Quay in Toronto. The format will be that of a "Carson-like" talk show, gay/bi hosted with Mark Henderson, Rusty Ryan and other celebrities. For information call 652-8082, or the theatre.

Don't Forget to Fill out Your Bi-Questionnaire!

Leo distributed copies of a special questionnaire for a research study on bisexuality. The researcher, Ron Fox, is a bisexual person, a licensed psychotherapist, and a graduate student in the Ph.D. Psychology Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. Everyone is invited to fill out the questionnaire, and to send it as soon as possible to Ron.

For copies, attend a meeting or call the OBN number on the front page of this newsletter.

Looking for Company? How about Romance?

OBN now has a *matchmaker* — someone who is willing to find out what kind of interests we have and what kind of human contact we are each looking for. Elana will help you break the ice and find others in the group who are interested in spending time together.

For *romance*, see Mark. He will help figure out where you are likely to find it. Elana and Mark can be found at our twice-monthly meetings at the 519 Community Centre. You can also write to them confidentially c/o OBN at the 519 Community Centre address on the front page.

(*Europe*, continued from page 2)

Den Haag, Netherlands

I was in Den Haag for over four days for the World Science Fiction Convention.

Most science fiction fans are g/l/bi positive, so I had no urge to hide my sexuality here. Unfortunately, most of the other non-hetero fans locked themselves in the closet for the weekend. I did meet up with one transvestite, though he may have just been in masquerade costume (i.e. just another Rocky Horror groupie).

All bisexuals stayed in hiding. An announcement of a "social outing" for gay and lesbian fans drew only 20 people out of an attendance of 2500 ... pretty disappointing.

I ended up hanging out with several gay fans from the U.S. and Holland. Instead of checking out the local night life (we heard that the bars were just the usual meat markets) we formed our own travelling party within the convention. It was a great time, and a source of support for me at a time when I really needed it.

Amsterdam

Allowing only two and a half days in Amsterdam was a really dumb thing to do. By the time I had the ways of the city reasonably figured out I was off to my next destination. There's a lot going on in this city and finding everything out (as well as just trying to find your way around) takes a few days. Ah well, I'll be back again in a few years (so I tell myself ...)

I stayed at the youth hostel on *Kloveniersburgwal* (I picked the one with the showers) which had available a good deal of information for gay tourists. Of particular note was an 8-page newspaper, *Gay Tourist Information*, which I didn't see anywhere else in Amsterdam. Much of this paper, notably the section on safe sexuality, was written for an exclusively male audience.

Also available at the hostel was a gay map. Again, much of the information was of interest to males only, although exclusively lesbian bars wer also listed. Frank and honest safe sexuality information for all genders and sexualities was also readily available at the hostel.

I checked out four of the gay bookstores in central Amsterdam; there are many of them. Only one of them had a periodical specifically for bis, the Dutch-language *Bi-Nieuws*, published by the *Landelijk Netwerk Bisexualiteit*. This publication is primarily essays about bisexuality, and has no news about events or venues of special interest to bis.

There is also another bi organization in Amsterdam, the *Werkgroep Bisexualiteit Amsterdam*, which is primarily a social organization. I attempted to reach this group by phone with no success.

Of some interest is the *NVSH (Dutch Society for Sexual Reform) Shop*; they have workgroups for bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, pedophiles and others. They have a small amount of books and periodicals available, almost all in Dutch. Surprisingly, they did not have copies of *Bi-Nieuws* or any other publications for bis.

The staffer I talked to wasn't aware of the bi scene; aside from some pretty general (and vague) information he suggested a few bars worth checking out. Aside from the literature, the shop also sells a variety of sex toys (including some of the most amazing dildoes I've ever seen) as well as condoms. They also provide counselling services.

One shop I did not make it to was the *Condomerie*, because I had difficulty finding it (welcome to Amsterdam). Its stock-in-trade should be obvious.

What of the nightlife? A few blocks from the hostel there is a district where there are bars and clubs of all sorts, and for all sorts. Several of them cater to "mixed" crowds: orientation doesn't matter! Walking through this area late at night is simply amazing. The streets are aswarm with people: gay, lesbian and hetero couples all mingling together.

I found this level of equality to be altogether a bit overwhelming at first, but it was great once I got used to it. Bars aren't usually my thing but somehow this scene seemed an exception to the usual thing.

Most overwhelming of anything I saw in Europe was the *HomoMonument*, in the *Westermarkt*. It was constructed in 1987 as a memorial of oppression in the past, as a present-day symbol of pride and struggle, and a hopeful sign of a liberated future. The design of the monument is very spare, its form nearly wholly symbolic. Sitting on its pink granite stones gave me feelings of incredible pride.

I had quite different feelings about the exhibit of instruments of torture from the 11th to 18th centuries, an ongoing display at the Justitia Hall. Practices reserved specifically for homosexual men and women (usually involving inflicting extreme pain to the genital region) were explicitly pointed out. I'm not a squeamish sort, but this aspect of the exhibition made my guts churn. I left it in a very sobered state of mind, to say the least.

Overall, though, Amsterdam was simply wonderful, and I look forward to going back in a few years, if not sooner!

Paris

Beats me. I was too preoccupied with visiting and doing a bit of shopping and sightseeing to investigate things. I did spend part of an afternoon with a gay computer programmer from L.A. (who I met in Den Haag) but all we did was wander around central Paris while (barely) avoiding getting lost, so no big deal. While in London I did see hefty guidebooks to the gay/lesbian life of Paris, so there's lots there if you do your homework first.

Berlin

This was the briefest of stays (32 hours) for me, hardly enough time for much of anything. I did notice though that many phone booths had a poster listing various community groups and services; included were phonelines for gay and lesbian groups. These services were attractively and prominently displayed as well, not just squeezed in at the bottom. The phone booths which did not have this info-poster all seemed to have ads for McDonalds; no comment about this.

Kassel (Bundesrepublik Deutschland)

Not a clue. I did see a whole bunch of pro-gay and pro-lesbian graffiti, but this could all be the handiwork of a few individuals. However, it wasn't obliterated either ...

On the whole, I got the impression that non-hetero people are accepted (or at least tolerated) a fair bit more in Europe than they are here, at least in the large cities. My reality sense could be badly skewed, however, because I stayed so briefly in each place.

I did have a wonderful time overseas, that is for certain, and I also feel I learned a few things. Not only was I exposed to many new things and learning experiences, but I was also put in closer touch with my own sexuality. For this reason alone I'm very glad I made this altogether enjoyable, though far too brief, journey.

Ménage à Trois

by Kimberly-Lei Mistysyn

Have you ever loved two people at the same time? Couldn't make up your mind between muscular Mark and gentle Steve?

Or found that you had deep feelings for your best friend Sue that were on the same level as the feelings you held for your boyfriend Jake? You wished time and time again that you could meet the one man of your dreams who embodied all the qualities that you admired?

But in the end you had to make a choice.

In the case of Mark and Steve it was easier because you just had to pick one over the other. But in the case of Sue and Jake, you figured that you were sick in the head for loving someone of the same gender and therefore you moved closer to the other.

Did loving Sue and Jake make you bisexual? Were you secretly homosexual? But it was the first time you were attracted to someone of the same gender, so maybe you were still a healthy heterosexual. Who were you? What were you? Why was it so hard to pick between two people?

Dilemmas like the one above have provided many a humourous plot in many a novel. Those novels are quite popular.

Many a fantasy has focused on threesomes or group sexual activities. The idea of being loved by two people sounds enticing and erotic. Many pornography magazines have endless photos of threesomes and we can safely assume that these magazines are bought by a wide range of people, both male and female, of all ages. To love more than one person at the same time is sinful, promiscuous, unfaithful ... right up on the list with other sins such as homosexuality and bisexuality.

But in the end, especially in the case of women, a choice is expected to be made. One simply must settle down with the right man, get married to make it official, and bear children.

What happens when you choose one person to settle down with, but spend the rest of your life thinking of someone else? Of course now there is that wonderful legal loophole called divorce so that if you make a mistake or become bored with your choice, you can choose again and then it is still monogamous. This is to prevent people from having affairs while trying to keep the marriage commitment.

The human heart is able to love many people in different ways all at once. How does one know for certain when he/she is married, that someone else won't come along?

What if you decided to have a relationship with both Sue and Jake at the same time? Could it work? Will it last? Or is this just the beginning of an endless line of kinky sexual desires that will keep growing until they can no longer be satisfied?

What happens when you really need to cry on Sue's shoulder, but she's busy with Jake in another room? How does Sue feel when she hears you telling Jake that you love him, when you've just told Sue the same thing? What if you want to go out to a very special event with Sue, but Jake wants to take her out as his date the same night? How will Sue choose?

Sounds like a mess. Sounds like there is too much possibility for people to get hurt.

These are my fears. I'm a lesbian in love with a bisexual woman named Miche.

Miche does love me, but she also loves a heterosexual man named Pete. She cannot decide between the two of us. Furthermore, she has declared that she will not choose between us and can never commit to just one of us.

Although she is bisexual, she does not feel that the issue is her need for both a man and a woman in her life. She specifically cannot choose between Pete and me, gender aside. She wants the three of us to move in together.

Now the choice is in my lap. Do I compromise and give her what she wants? Or do I leave her life completely?

My friends feel that I should get out before I get hurt. They tell me I *need* a monogamous relationship. To an extent they are right. I have grown up *believing* and *expecting* to be in a monogamous relationship. That does not mean that I *need* such a relationship.

I feel ashamed sometimes because I like the idea of a threesome. I like Pete an awful lot. Perhaps if it had been anyone else, I wouldn't consider it. I can commiserate with Pete about how we both feel for Miche.

My friends inform me that it won't last. Won't it? I know people who have been having affairs for years. People who are married, but everyone is aware of what is going on. Is that not essentially the same thing? The assumption is that anything non-monogamous will not last. History tells us a different story. There is evidence of documented threesomes that did last. Society just wants to cover them up.

What is so wrong with three people loving each other? I should not have to be ashamed. I should not have to label myself as strictly a lesbian or bisexual either. I am me. I will be living with two people whom I care for very much. There will be advantages: no loneliness, a larger income ... there will also be disadvantages such as more compromising and sharing. Maybe the world would benefit if we all compromised and shared more. Maybe we could make up our own wedding ceremony among the three of us.

And, I guess, if you need a shoulder to cry on but Sue and Jake are busy in another room, then you go on into that room, interrupt them, and get double the comfort. After all, the three of you are in this arrangement together.

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